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# Nasal Trauma Advice Sheet

You have been treated in the Emergency Department or Minor Injury Unit with a broken nose (nasal fracture). This leaflet gives advice on how to care for your fracture at home.

## **Diagnosing a broken nose (nasal fracture)**

Diagnosis is largely through clinical examination. The nasal bones are the most commonly broken bones of the face due to their exposed position and limited structural support. X-rays are not usually helpful in diagnosing a broken nose but may be performed to look for fractures of other facial bones.

Signs that suggest a nose may be broken after injury include obvious change in nose shape, wobbling, crunching noises, swelling, bruising, nosebleed, and blocked nose.

Swelling soon after injury can make it difficult to tell if a nose is broken and whether the broken bones have moved out of their normal position. If the nasal bones have broken but not moved out of their normal position, they will heal with no change to the overall shape of the nose.

## **Looking after my broken nose**

Your Emergency or Minor injury department doctor or nurse practitioner will examine your nose to check that you can breathe through both nostrils and that there is no blood-filled swelling in the partition between the two nostrils, active bleeding, leak of fluid from around the brain, double vision, or loss of sensation.

## What to do:

- Use ice packs and take regular painkillers.
- If you have been given antibiotics, please complete the full course.
- Keep any wounds dry until they have fully healed up. Any stitches should be taken out by your GP practice nurse after 5-7 days. You will need to book this appointment with your GP practice receptionist.
- Avoid re-injury of the nose – no contact sports for 3 weeks to allow healing.

Any swelling will start to settle a few days after the injury. The bones usually stabilise within 10 days and will set in place and heal in 2-3 weeks. Follow-up in the Ear, Nose and Throat department may be arranged (see follow-up section).

## Nose bleeds (epistaxis)

Nose bleeds are common after a nasal injury. If bleeding occurs, you should lean forward and pinch the soft part of your nose (closing both nostrils) tightly between finger and thumb. You should do this without letting go for at least 15 minutes. Spit out any blood that runs into the mouth, as swallowed blood can irritate the stomach and make you feel sick. If bleeding fails to stop, continue to hold the nose and return to A&E/Minor Injury Unit.

## Rare complications of nose injury

- **CSF (cerebrospinal fluid) leak**  
Clear watery discharge from one nostril after injury can indicate a leak of fluid (CSF) from around the brain into the nose. This will put you at risk of meningitis. You should return to A&E if you have this symptom.
- **Septal haematoma (blood-filled swelling in the partition between the two nostrils)**  
A septal haematoma may be present if you become feverish or develop a purple swelling in the nose that may be painful or cause the nose to feel blocked. Left untreated, a septal haematoma can destroy the cartilage of the nose causing permanent deformity. If you have symptoms of septal haematoma, you should return to A&E to have your nose re-assessed.

## **Follow up**

If a broken nose is suspected, a follow-up appointment with the Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT) department may be arranged. This usually takes place at around 7-10 days post-injury when the swelling has reduced. If the bones have moved out of their normal position and the nose is newly crooked, a small operation involving a short general anaesthetic may be offered to reset the nose. This operation (a nasal fracture reduction) should occur within 2-3 weeks of injury. If surgery is delayed, it may not be possible to reset the nose under a short anaesthetic as the bones will set fully. A larger procedure may then be required to achieve the same results.

**If you have any concerns with regards to your head injury, please contact or go to your nearest A&E (GUH A&E)**

**Do not attend the Minor Injury Unit where you were seen for further assessment**

**Emergency Department or Minor Injury Unit (MIU):**

**Royal Gwent Hospital: 01633 234056**

**Nevill Hall Hospital: 01873 732073**

**Grange University Hospital: 01633 493287**

**Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr (YYF) MIU: 01443 802353**

**Ysbyty Aneurin Bevan (YAB) MIU: 01495 363318**

## Nasal Fracture Follow-up Appointment

*Patient addressograph*

### Nasal Fracture Follow-up Appointment

My nasal fracture occurred on:

.....

My ENT follow-up appointment is on: ...../...../..... (Date)

at...../..... (Time)

Please attend the ENT Outpatients Department in the E block at the Royal Gwent Hospital.

This appointment is to book a nasal fracture reduction (resetting of a broken nose) if it is indicated. The operation would not happen on the same day.

When the swelling has settled (usually 3-5 days after injury), if you are happy with the shape of your nose, please cancel your appointment by calling 01633 234018 or 01633 234365.

This helps us to avoid wasted appointments and unnecessary patient visits to hospital.

If you have been told to self-isolate for any reason, please do not attend your appointment. Please re-arrange your appointment using the above telephone numbers. If you need urgent medical attention, attend the 24hrs A&E at the Grange University Hospital.

Further information can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/broken-nose/>

**"This document is available in Welsh /  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg".**